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The Rewriting of Exodus 24:12-18 in Jubilees 1:1-4

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Introduction

The Book of Jubilees is presented as a revelation which Moses received at Mount Sinai. It actually consists of a rewriting and interpretation of the biblical narrative from Genesis 1 to Exodus 16. It resembles very much the fragmentarily preserved *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* of Pseudo-Philo. It corresponds to the biblical text very closely, but sometimes the author feels free to deviate considerably from his example. In order to get a clear picture of the exegetical methods of the author it is necessary to put the synoptic perspective to the utmost, and to show in detail how variations in sequence or detail have hermeneutical effects and reflects exegetical techniques.¹

In this article I confine myself to the beginning of the book, Jub 1:1-4, the passage in which Moses ascends Mount Sinai to receive the two tables of the law. In my opinion some important exegetical strategies of the author can be discovered here. The text of Jubilees corresponds to the text of Ex 24:12-18 very closely, but a comparison makes clear that Jub 1:1-4 disagree in many respects with its model. Apart from the *additions*, the author *omits* passages and *modifies* at other points. I investigate what exactly has been changed and why it has been changed in this way.

A synopsis of the texts

I offer here a translation of the massoretic text of Ex 24:12-18 on the one hand, and a translation of a part of the text of 4Q216, column I, on the other. This fragment is identified as the prologue of Jubilees and Jub 1:1-2, 4-7.² Most of the Hebrew text offered by VanderKam and Milik is a reconstruction on the basis of the Ethiopic version of the text.³ The elements of Exodus 24:12-18 which do *not* occur in Jubilees 1:1-4, and vice versa, are put in bold. The remaining differences between both texts are in italics.

1 Research on biblical interpretation in Jubilees, as far as Jub 19-45 is concerned, has been done by J. C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS, 18), Washington 1987. See the critical review of this book by M. Fishbane in: *JBL* 107 (1988) 526-528. See also: J. C. VanderKam, *Biblical Interpretation in 1 Enoch and Jubilees*, in: J. H. Charlesworth - C. A. Evans, *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* [JSPSS 14], Sheffield 1993, p. 96-125.

2 J. C. VanderKam - J. T. Milik, *The First Jubilees Manuscript from Qumran Cave 4: A Preliminary Publication*, *JBL* 110 (1991) 243-270.

3 For the critical edition of the Ethiopic text and a translation, see: J. C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees, I-II* (CSCO 510-511; Scriptores Aethiopici 87-88), Leuven 1989. Other important translations can be found in: R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis Translated from the Editor's Ethiopic Text and Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and Indices*, London 1902; K. Berger, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (JSRZ, II.3), Gütersloh 1981; O. S. Wintermute, 'Jubilees', in: J. H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, I-II*, London 1983-85, II, p. 35-142.

(19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone forth out of the the land of Egypt, on that day)

12a YHWH *said* to Moses:

b ‘Come up to me on the mountain,

c **and wait there;**

d *and I will give you the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment,*

e which I have written to teach them.

13a **So Moses rose with his servant Joshua,**

b and Moses went up to the mountain *of God*.

14a **And he said to the elders:**

b **Tarry here for us,**

c **until we come to you again;**

d **and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you;**

e **whoever has a cause, let him go to them.**

15a **Then Moses went up on the mountain,**

b **and the cloud covered the mountain.**

16a The glory of YHWH settled on Mount Sinai,

b and the cloud covered it six days;

c and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17 Now the appearance of the glory of YHWH was like a *devouring* fire on the top of the mountain,

in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18a **And Moses entered the cloud,**

b **and went up on the mountain.**

c And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

1:1a **And it happened**

b **in the first year of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt,**

c **in the third month,**

- on the sixteenth of this month -

d *that* YHWH *said* to Moses:

e Come up to me on the mountain.

f *I will give you the two stone tablets, the law and the commandment*

g which I have written to teach them.

2a And Moses went up to the mountain *of YHWH*.

b The glory of YHWH settled on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it six days.

3a And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

b Now the appearance of the glory of YHWH was like a fire *burning* on the top of the mountain.

4a And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights

b **and YHWH told him the first and the last things as well what will come.**

c **He related to him the division of the times - for the law and for the testimony.**

The omissions

It is obvious that the whole text of Jubilees 1:1-4 corresponds more or less with the text of Exodus 24:12-18, with the exception of the beginning (v. 1a-c) and the end (v. 4bc). What one strikes the most, are the *omissions* which the author of Jubilees has permitted himself (vv. 12c, 13a, 14, 15, 17, 18ab). More than one reason can be given for these omissions.

The first reason is *the particular character of the book*. This explains the absence of

Joshua (v. 13a), the elders (v. 14a-e) and the children of Israel (v. 17). The Book of Jubilees stresses that Moses is alone on the mountain. The book is presented as a revelation which Moses, and he alone, received at Mount Sinai. The presence of other people does not fit very well with fact. The omission of v. 15a ('Then Moses went up on the mountain') is caused by the omission of v. 14a-e. The statement that Moses went up on the mountain is already made in v. 13b. By omitting v. 14, the author would have written two nearly identical phrases that follow each other.

Besides, the author has a tendency *to avoid repetitions*, which is connected with the *avoidance of tensions and contradictions*. This tendency explains the omission of v. 18b, where it is stated that Moses went up on the mountain once again. Moreover, Moses is already on the mountain. The statement that he is going up again is in fact a contradiction, because Moses did not go down.

The tendency to avoid repetitions also explains the omission v. 15b ('And the cloud covered the mountain'), because this phrase is being repeated in v. 16, whereas the absence of v. 18a ('And Moses entered the cloud') follows this pattern. In v. 13b (= Jub 1:2a) it has been said that Moses went up on the mountain, and in v. 15b, 16b (= Jub 1:2c) that the cloud covers this mountain, after which YHWH calls Moses (v. 16c). The statement in v. 18a that Moses enters the cloud again, repeats and contradicts what is said earlier in the text.

Summarizing, it may be said that the *the omissions* reveal the particular character of the Book of Jubilees and the tendency to avoid repetitions and contradictions. At the one hand the author changes the text for his own purposes, at the other he tries to omit elements which are incomprehensible.

The additions

At the beginning (v. 1a-c) and at the end (v. 4bc) the author makes some *additions*. The date at the beginning is a modification of Ex 19:1. Compared to Ex 19:1 the text of Jub 1:1a-c has two additions: 'And it happened in the first year' and 'on the sixteenth of this month', whereas the word 'land' is lacking.⁴ These modification in Jubilees are caused by the date in Ex 19:1, which is inaccurate ('in the third month ... on that day'). The use of Ex 19:1 and the additions show the tendency to date the historical events as exact as possible. The Book of Jubilees lays the emphasis very much on matters concerning the calendar. The world-history is divided into periods in order to discover its patterns. If one knows the patterns, it is possible to extrapolate. This emerges not only from the beginning, but also from the addition in v. 4bc, where the author speaks about the beginning and about what will come in the future.

⁴ It is possible that the author of Jubilees omitted the word 'land' by himself, since the word 'land' occurs not only in the massoretic text, but also in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuaginta. However, it is also possible that the word 'land' did not occur in his *Vorlage*. Also in the Peshitta the word is lacking.

The modifications

The remaining differences between both texts are *modifications*. Jubilees 1:1d ('that YHWH said to Moses') is a change of the syntactic structure of Ex 24:12a ('YHWH said to Moses') causes by the date that precedes the beginning of the text.⁵

The second modification concerns Jub 1:1f ('I will give you the two stone tablets, the law and the commandment'). The phrase has several differences compared to Ex 24:12d ('and I will give you the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment').

In the first place the subjunctive of the verb (MT Ex 24:12d: אֶתֵּן) does not occur in Jub 1:1f. Some Ethiopic manuscripts of the Book of Jubilees agree with the Ethiopic text of Exodus in reading a subjunctive form of the verb. Probably, they try to harmonize the text of Jubilees with the biblical text. The preferred reading in the critical edition of the Ethiopic text of the Book of Jubilees is the indicative form, which agrees with the Samaritan Pentateuch (אֶתֵּן) and the Septuagint (δοῦναι).⁶ Probably the author of Jubilees had a text of Ex 24:12d that was different from the massoretic text.⁷

In the second place, in Jub 1:1f the word *two* is added. This addition shows the tendency to *harmonize* different versions of the same story. Other biblical texts in which the tablets of stone occur use the word *two*: 'the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone' (Ex 31:18; cmp. Ex 32:15; 34:29; Deut 4:13; 5:22ff.; 9:9-11). It is striking, however, that the word 'testimony' is not taken from these texts, whereas this notion is very important in the Book of Jubilees.

In the third place, one can point to the lacking of the conjunction ו ('and') in Jub 1:1f. The massoretic text of Exodus 24:12d reads: 'the tablets of stone, *and* the law and the commandment', whereas Jubilees 1:1f reads the words 'law' and 'commandment' as apposition to tablets ('the two stone tablets, the law and the commandment'). In the other texts, in which is dealt with the two tablets of stone, the conjunction is also lacking. However, the syntactical construction of the words is different from that of the words in the text of Jubilees. It is not likely, therefore, that the reason for this modification is the tendency of the author to harmonize parallel passages. Because the conjunction is also lacking in the Samaritan Pentateuch and in the Septuagint it is very well possible that the author of Jubilees had a text of Ex 23:12d slightly different from the massoretic version.⁸

Finally, I point to the variant in Jubilees 1:3b, which reads that the appearance of the glory of YHWH was 'like a fire *burning* on the top of the mountain', whereas the text of

⁵ It is not quite clear why the verb אמר has been changed in דבר followed by לאמר.

⁶ VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, II, p. 1.

⁷ For an analysis of the textform of the Pentateuch used by the author of Jubilees, see: J. C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (HSM 14), Missoula 1977, p. 103-198.

⁸ As far as the content is concerned the difference between Ex 24:12d and Jub 1:1f should not be overstressed. It is possible to read the ו as a *waw-explicativum*. See: *GK*²⁸, par 154a; *HAL*, p. 247-249.

Exodus 24:17 reads that the appearance was 'like a *devouring* fire'. Probably, it is another example of the tendency to harmonize parallel passages. With respect to the revelation on Mount Sinai most of the texts speak about a fire that *burns* (e.g. Deut 4:11; 5:23; 9:15). However, I should add to this that, apart from Exodus 24:17, also in Deut 5:25 it is said with respect to the revelation that 'this great fire will *devour* us'. Also elsewhere the metaphor of a 'devouring fire' is used in connection with the revelation of YHWH. It is not clear, therefore, why the author of Jubilees has chosen for 'a burning fire'.

Conclusion

In this article I have tried to explore the way the author of the Book of Jubilees made use of the Old Testament on the basis of a comparison of Jub 1:1-4 and Ex 24:12-18. The synopsis illustrated the ways of handling with the text. The text of Jubilees corresponds to that of Exodus very closely, but the author of the Book of Jubilees is also changing his model. He omits certain passages and adds other, while he also modifies passages that run parallel. Case by case I have tried to interpret the changes of the original text. Several times, I expressed the assumption that the author of Jubilees used a text of Ex 24:12-18, which was different from the massoretic text on certain points. In these cases the differences are not real modifications. However, it is likely that most of the text he had in front of him was identical to the massoretic text of Exodus. At the one hand the author changes this text for his own purposes, at the other he tries to omit elements which are incomprehensible. I discovered some exegetical strategies in Jub 1:1-4. I pointed to the tendency of the author to prevent repetitions and contradictions in the text, and to harmonize different versions of the same narrative. At other places he changed the text of Exodus for his personal purposes. I pointed at the omission of Joshua, the elders and the children of Israel, and at the tendency to date the historical events as exact as possible.